



Species Occurrence and Distribution

Background

An important function of the National Park Service (NPS) is protecting and maintaining the level of biological diversity found within parks. Park managers, planners, and scientists require information on species occurrence as a basis for making decisions and working with other agencies, the scientific community, and the public for the long-term protection of park ecosystems.

Information related to species occurrence and distribution has been addressed by providing funding and technical assistance for parks to compile existing information on vertebrates and vascular plants, and to conduct new field investigations of species identified as high-priority by parks. The available funding for this inventory was distributed among the 32 Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) Program networks of parks, which leveraged the funds through partnerships with various universities, agencies, and other organizations.

Products

The primary products resulting from these inventories are reports and associated data sets (e.g., species lists with related attribute and spatial data). Reports document vertebrate or vascular plant species, and describe survey methods, species locations, associated habitat, observation details, and other attributes.

Associated data sets typically follow service-wide I&M data structures and are standardized with location and observation data. In addition to these products, the results of species detections are incorporated into the national NPSpecies database.

Status

The initial funding provided in 2000-2005 allowed most parks to conduct field studies to determine the occurrence of vertebrates and vascular plants. These are groups for which methodology and taxonomy were better developed at the time, and therefore could be surveyed more efficiently; however, only limited work on the distribution and abundance of the park's highest-priority species could be undertaken.

Additional field investigations will be conducted as funding becomes available to provide baseline data on the occurrence, distribution, and abundance of species that parks determine to be of highest priority for management and conservation. Advances in methodology, technology, and taxonomy now make it possible to efficiently survey groups other than vertebrates and vascular plants that were not included in the initial inventory efforts.



Seining for fish at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve.

Information resulting from these inventories, including reports and species lists, can be discovered via IRMA -- the Integrated Information Management Applications website, at <http://nrinfo.nps.gov>.

More Information

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<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/inventory/spplists/>